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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000817

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SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CHAIR CRITICIZES BSP INITIATIVES

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Joseph Gregoire for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Baghdad Provincial Council (PC) Chairman Mueen Al-Kadhimi (SCIRI) complained in a March 4 press conference as well as to PRToffs March 6 that the national government has not consulted the PC on Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) initiatives. Al-Kadhimi said he resented the fact that instead of the PC security committee, Ahmed Chalabi is overseeing the popular mobilization strand of the BSP and claimed that DPM Salam Zobai has usurped provincial authority over essential services planning and execution. End Summary.

Al-Kadhimi Supports Mobilization, Rejects Chalabi  
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¶2. (SBU) In a press conference March 4 at the PC building, Chairman Al-Kadhimi, flanked by District Council, Amanat (City Hall) and local security officials, rebuked national government officials for the lack of PC leadership of the BSP. In comments to the press, meeting attendees claimed Chalabi lacks support among both Baghdad's Sunni and Shia communities. One attendee said, "Over the past four years, Chalabi has been unable to accomplish anything in the public interest, in spite of American support. He failed to win even one seat in the Council of Representatives..." PC members further commented that Chalabi is using the Popular Mobilization initiative to extend his influence among Baghdad's Shia population.

¶3. (C) PRToffs met with PC Chairman Mueen Al-Kadhimi March 6 to discuss his views on the essential services and popular mobilization strands of the BSP. Al-Kadhimi said he supports the idea of popular mobilization but that he does not approve of Ahmed Chalabi's leadership of the initiative. He said the PC's security committee is the appropriate lead for the popular committees. Al-Kadhimi said that, failing explicit PC leadership of the popular mobilization strand, at least efforts should be coordinated with the PC.

DPM Fails to Consult on Essential Services  
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¶4. (C) Al-Kadhimi said that Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zobai is not the appropriate lead for the essential services strand of the BSP, and that according to the Iraqi Constitution, such responsibilities are within the purview of the provincial government. Al-Kadhimi added that Zobai is not consulting with municipal authorities such as the Amanat on efforts to improve the provision of essential services. (Comment: In fact, Zobai is consulting with those authorities through the Joint Reconstruction Operations Center and the Joint Planning Committee, but Al-Kadhimi's remarks illustrate his frustration with the PC's perceived marginalization in the BSP. End Comment.)  
KHALILZAD